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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/611,611	07/01/2003	Noel F. Dehne	70520-2046	1450
7590	12/23/2005		EXAMINER	
Douglas A. Mullen Dickinson Wright PLLC Suite 800 1901 L. Street NW Washington, DC 20036			DEUBLE, MARK A	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3651	
			DATE MAILED: 12/23/2005	

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/611,611	DEHNE ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Mark A. Deuble	3651

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-21 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 12-21 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-9 and 11 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) 10 is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 10/20/2003.
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Arkawa et al. (U.S. patent No. 4,944,229).

Arkawa et al. shows a part of a manufacturing operation that includes a plurality of platforms 2 each having an independently controllable and steerable drive assembly 7. In operation, the platforms are moved through a production area with adjacent platforms spaced from one another at a second distance. When the platforms get out of order, they are removed from the production area to what may be considered to be a delivery area where they are moved freely independently of the track so that they spaced apart from each other at a first distance that is greater than the second distance under normal operating conditions. Thus Arkawa et al. shows all the structure required by claim 1.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 2-9, and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Arkawa et al. in view of Kyotani et al. (U.S. patent No. 5,839,567).

Arkawa et al. shows a manufacturing operation with all the structure required by claim 1, it does not have the controller, the bridge, and the link mechanisms required by the present invention. However, Kyotani et al. shows a manufacturing operating with a plurality of platforms 10 that are controlled so that they maintain a zero gap between adjacent platforms in a production area. This is done by communicating with drive release actuators 49 on each platform and commanding them to link to or unlink from the drive to thereby control the velocities of the platforms. This is also done through a bridge mechanism/link coupler 58-59 that spans the zero gap between first platform and a second platform following the first platform in a production area. The bridge mechanism includes a bridge plate 59a pivotally coupled to one of the first and second platforms and a cam 59b that is engageable with the pivoting plate so that the bridge plate also acts as a latch mechanically coupling adjacent platforms. The bridge plate pivots about a horizontal axis extending laterally across the platform so that it is perpendicular to the longitudinal path of travel of the platforms. The bridge mechanism also includes resilient bumpers 56 and 57. Kyotani et al. teaches that the control and bridge mechanism/link coupler advantageously keep the platforms closely spaced as they move through a production area and that long trains of platforms are advantageous in a manufacturing operation. Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to control the platforms of Arkawa et al. so that their velocity is controlled to maintain a zero gap between adjacent platforms in the production area and to link with the bridge mechanism/link coupler

described above according to the teachings of Kyotani et al. When this is done, the resulting apparatus would have all the structure required by claims 1-9, and 11.

Allowable Subject Matter

5. Claim 10 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Conclusion

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Mark A. Deuble whose telephone number is (571) 272-6912. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday except for alternate Fridays.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gene O. Crawford can be reached on (571) 272-6911. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

md

MARK A. DEUBLE
PATENT EXAMINER

